

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Claim for Priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document, and for the acknowledgment of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statements by return of the Forms PTO-1449. Applicants also note that the Examiner has not indicated that the drawings have been approved by the Official Draftsperson on a Form PTO-948. The Examiner is thus requested to indicate that Applicants' drawings are acceptable in the next Official Action.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claim 32.

Upon entry of the above amendment, claims 1 and 32-34 will have been amended. Claims 1-34 are currently pending. Claims 2-30 remain withdrawn as directed to a nonelected invention. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejection and allowance of claims 1 and 31-34 in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

The Examiner has objected to claim 32 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but as being allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 32 has been rewritten in independent form to include the subject matter of base claim 1 and intervening claim 31. Accordingly, in view

of the above noted amendments and remarks, it is believed that the objection to claim 32 has been overcome, and Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding objection to claim 32.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 31, 33, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by EDWARDS et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,603,093). The Examiner takes the position that the EDWARDS et al. patent discloses a prismatic battery including separation walls 24, electroconductive connector 45, and lead portions 40 including projections 54 which form a raised portion.

Although Applicants do not necessarily agree with the Examiner's rejection of the claims on this ground, nevertheless, Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 33, and 34 to clearly obviate the above noted ground of rejection in order to expedite prosecution of the present application. In this regard, Applicants note that EDWARDS et al. fails to show each and every element recited in the amended claims. In particular, claim 1, as amended, sets forth a prismatic battery module including, inter alia, "an electroconductive connector forming at least a central part of the separation wall arranged between the cell cases" and positive and negative electrode plates, "wherein the positive electrode plates and the negative electrode plates are directly connected to the respective electroconductive connectors arranged on both sides of each cell case". Claim 33, as amended, sets forth a method for manufacturing a prismatic battery module including, inter alia, "connecting a plurality of

prismatic cell cases with each other through separation walls, at least a central part of which is formed of an electroconductive connector, thereby form a prismatic battery case”, forming an electrode plate group, and “placing the electrode plate group in each of the cell cases to directly connect the lead portions on either side of the electrode plate group to the respective electroconductive connectors arranged on both sides of the cell case”. Claim 34, as amended, sets forth a method for manufacturing a prismatic battery module including, inter alia, “connecting the lead portions of the positive and the negative electrode plates of the electrode plate groups with each other solely through electroconductive connector plates”. Support for the present amendment can be found at least on pages 39-41 of the specification and in figures 28-30.

The EDWARDS et al. patent discloses a battery including walls 24, bus bars 46 having bends 54 and upper arms 56, tabs or tigs 40, 42, and cylinders 45 provided in the upper portion of the wall 24. See particularly figures 2 and 3. As can be seen particularly in figures 2 and 3, the bus bars, which include the bends 54 and upper arms 56, are separate from the tabs or tigs 40, 42. The tabs or tigs 40, 42 may be viewed as corresponding to the lead portions of Applicants’ claimed invention. Further, the bus bars 46 of EDWARDS et al. are connected to the cylinder 45, which is provided in an upper portion of the wall 24. Accordingly, the claims of the present application can only fairly be read such that the bus bars 46 of the EDWARDS et al. device correspond to the collector plates 10a, 10b of

Applicants' Admitted Prior Art shown in figures 32-34. As described in Applicants' specification, the device of Applicants' Admitted Prior Art in figures 32-34 includes collector plates. However, it is pointed out that in Applicants' claimed invention, the collector plates are eliminated from a battery module by directly connecting lead portions of electrode plates to electroconductive connectors. Thus, the EDWARDS et al. patent teaches a device having collector plates. EDWARDS et al. does not disclose a battery in which lead portions of electrode plates are directly connected to electroconductive connectors. Since the lead portions are not directly connected to the electroconductive connectors, the collector plates are not eliminated in the EDWARDS et al. device.

Accordingly, the EDWARDS et al. patent does not show a device including "an electroconductive connector forming at least a central part of the separation wall arranged between the cell cases" and positive and negative electrode plates, "wherein the positive electrode plates and the negative electrode plates are directly connected to the respective electroconductive connectors arranged on both sides of each cell case", as set forth in amended claim 1. Further, the EDWARDS et al. patent fails to show a method including "connecting a plurality of prismatic cell cases with each other through separation walls, at least a central part of which is formed of an electroconductive connector, thereby form a prismatic battery case", forming an electrode plate group, and "placing the electrode plate group in each of the cell cases to directly connect the lead portions on either side of the

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electrode plate group to the respective electroconductive connectors arranged on both sides of the cell case”, as set forth in amended claim 33. The EDWARDS et al. patent fails to show a method including “connecting the lead portions of the positive and the negative electrode plates of the electrode plate groups with each other solely through electroconductive connector plates”, as set forth in amended claim 34. Since the reference fails to show each and every element of the claimed device and method, the rejection of claims 1, 31, 33, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over EDWARDS et al. is improper and withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and rejection, and an early indication of the allowance of claims 1 and 31-34.

COMMENTS ON EXAMINER’S STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

In response to the Reasons for Allowance, Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of the claims in the present invention.

In this regard, while Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner’s indication that (as noted by the Examiner) the prior art of record does not “teach or render obvious the instant invention regarding the electroconductive conductor formed as a pair of tapered connection surfaces in surface contact with a sloped surface of the raised portion of the lead portions” and that the conductors of the HARDIN patent (U.S. Patent No. 4,464,827) “are

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not configured to form at least part of the separation wall”, Applicants further wish to make clear that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and that patentability of these claims is also based on the totality of the features recited therein, which define over the prior art.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, it is submitted that the present amendment is proper and that none of the references of record, considered alone or in any proper combination thereof, anticipate or render obvious Applicants’ invention as recited in claims 1 and 31-34. The applied references of record have been discussed and distinguished, while significant claimed features of the present invention have been pointed out.

Accordingly, consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action, and allowance of the present amendment and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

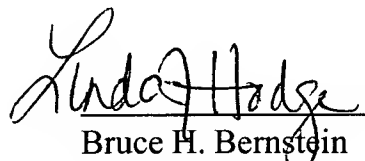
Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection base upon the prior art, should be

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considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below listed number.

Respectfully submitted,
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